

Art Smart: Why arts education should be a priority

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Providing information to all Montanans through funding by the National Endowment for the Arts and the State of Montana

WESTERN ART WEEK

Great Falls hums with art auctions and exhibitions



The Russell: "Postcard from Miles City" by Bozeman artist Michael Blessing

The Electric City is humming with art displays and auctions March 18-22 during Western Art Week, the annual convergence of art makers and admirers.

The Russell Exhibition and Sale, March 19-22 at the C.M. Russell Museum and the Mansfield Center: The signature fund-raising event for the C.M. Russell Museum kicks off Thursday with

a Preview Party 6-8 p.m. at the museum. Meadow Lark Country Club hosts Art in Action, a quick-finish event, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Friday; action moves to the Mansfield Center for the First Strike Friday Night Live Auction, 6-9 p.m. Saturday brings a free educational symposium, "A New Vision of Wilderness: Nineteenth-Century American Art, Conservation, and the National Park Movement," 9 a.m.-noon; and The Russell live auction, 5-10 p.m. Throughout the week, the 22 distinguished painters and sculptors of the Russell Skull Society of Artists will display and sell their work at the Mansfield Center (727-8787 or www.cmrussell.org).

Western Heritage Artists Association Art Show, March 18-22 at the Holiday Inn: This 34th annual show, which features works by more than 60 artists in an array of media, kicks off with Preview Night at 7 p.m. Wednesday. During the Quick Finish and Auction at 6 p.m. Thursday, artists spend 45 minutes creating artworks, followed by a sale of these quick creations, with a percentage of proceeds supporting the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center. The Paint-Around at 6 p.m. Friday is a timed event, where each artist has 10 minutes to work on a piece before passing it on to their neighbor; and Art Competing for Causes at 5 p.m. Saturday, features live and silent auctions and live music (406-868-9649 or www.westernheritageartshow.com).



Western Heritage Artists Association Sale: "Texas Buck" by Ed Anderson

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Tourism industry launches SB264 to boost benefits of arts, culture, parks and tourism

Montana's tourism industry leaders have long been concerned about the effect of budgetary shortfalls and recurring funding challenges among its cultural and historical heritage partners (including the Montana Arts Council).

SB264, branded by the tourism industry as "Best Place First: Growing Montana's Economy and Preserving Our Heritage," is a bill sponsored by Sen. Bob Keenan from Bigfork and created to address these challenges.

Currently, the state has a 7% bed tax (Accommodation Sales and Use Tax). Of that total, 4% goes for tourism promotion and the other 3% goes to the state general fund. This 3% originated in 2003 to address a funding crisis in the state. The "Best Place First" bill would appropriate 60% (a projected \$10.8 million in FY 2016) of that 3% bed tax and the Rental Vehicle Sales Tax at a projected \$18 million in FY 2016.

Half of the appropriated funds would be distributed to the Montana Office of Tourism and the state's 21 travel regions and convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs). Tourism research shows that, for every dollar spent on tourism promotion, at least \$2 is generated in state revenue. This fact ensures the legislation would be revenue neutral.

The other half of the appropriated funds would be distributed among tourism's partners: State Parks, the Montana Historical Society, the Montana Heritage Commission and the Montana Arts Council. It would also create a preservation grant program for the state's historic properties. Distribution to the partners would be done annually on a set percentage basis.

As introduced, the bill would allocate the 3% bed/rent-

al car vehicle tax as follows:

- 40% to remain in state general fund;
- 22.5% to Montana Office of Tourism for tourism promotion and the promotion of the state as a location for the production of motion pictures, television commercials and related visual productions;
- 9.72% to State Parks for the renovation, replacement and enhancement of state parks;
- 7.5% to regional nonprofit tourism corporations for cultural and heritage tourism;
- 7.2% to the Montana Historical Society to use for the ongoing preservation and security of Montana's historic heritage; and
- 7.08% to the Montana Arts Council to be used for programs supporting economic development, education and cultural tourism;
- 3.48% to the Montana Heritage Preservation and Development Commission to be used for the preservation, protection and enhancement of heritage commission historic properties;
- 2.52% for a new grant program supporting heritage properties, administered by State Parks.

This bill would, for the first time, offer tourism partners the ability to strategically invest in organizations and projects to help meet demonstrated local needs. It also, for the first time, underscores the value of arts, culture and history to the tourism branding of the state.

For more information and to keep up with the latest on this legislation, visit www.tourismmattersmt.org/category/key-issues/. As of the press date for *State of the Arts*, the first hearing was scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 19, in Senate Finance and Claims.

Montana-grown actor J.K. Simmons nominated for Oscar

Critics are predicting that former Missoula resident and University of Montana graduate J.K. Simmons will claim an Oscar as best supporting actor Feb. 22 for his role as a brutally demanding music teacher in "Whiplash." He's already swept the rest of the field, claiming Golden Globe, Critics' Choice, and Screen Actors Guild (SAG) awards, as well as a British Academy Film Award (BAFTA).

Other supporting actor nominees are Robert Duvall ("The Judge"), Edward Norton ("Birdman"), Mark Ruffalo ("Foxcatcher") and Ethan Hawke ("Boyhood").

Writer-director Damien Chazelle based the script on his own experience as a high school jazz drummer, at the mercy of a merciless teacher. When it debuted in 2014 at Sundance, it earned the grand jury prize and audience award for drama.

"Fast, furious, raging perfection in bleeding hands, broken sticks, broken relationships, broken lives. Debris surrounding transcendent greatness. Ecstasy within the agony," wrote *Los Angeles Times* film critic Betsy Sharkey. "That is 'Whiplash,' with an amazing Miles Teller on drums, a terrifying J.K. Simmons setting the tempo. A movie you feel as much as you see, and what you see is both exquisite and excruciating."

Although Simmons has been a sought-after actor in Hollywood for years, with roles ranging from the quirky father in "Juno" to a neo-Nazi on HBO's "Oz," this is his first Oscar nomination.

His father, the late Don Simmons, was head of the UM Music Department and assistant dean of the School of Fine Arts for many years. The younger Simmons attended UM from 1974-78, studying conducting, composition and voice.

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Oscar contender J.K. Simmons

Public Value Partnerships Guidelines and materials available

Public Value Partnerships between Montana nonprofit arts organizations and the Montana Arts Council champion the fact that the arts are of benefit to all the citizens of Montana and are worthy of state and federal investment.

Public Value Partnerships provide overall operating support toward the educational mission of Montana nonprofit arts organizations that have had their 501(c)(3) status for a minimum of five years and have at least one half-time paid staff member and year-round activities.

Guidelines and application materials are now available for new applicants to the Public Value Partnerships program. **The deadline is 5 p.m. Friday, April 3, 2015.**

Please see our website for more information: www.art.mt.gov/orgs/orgs_publicvalue.asp.

If you have questions, please contact Kristin Han Burgoyne, 406-444-6449 or kburgoyne@mt.gov.